

D. H. Person

Pam.
Europe
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IRELAND
OPENING TO THE
WORD OF GOD,
1893.

Bible & Colportage Society.



**THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CURE
FOR IRELAND'S WOES.**



(Extracted from Report of Bible and Colportage Society of Ireland for year ending 31st March, 1893.)

Statements of Colporteurs.



The following indicates a fine spirit of hopefulness in a very difficult field:—

“ My sales for the past year have been something over the year previous. I find that it is the want of money that has kept the people from buying far more. The desire for knowledge is and has been greatly on the increase.

“ I have travelled in difficult and dangerous places (where for miles there is not a Protestant family to be found), and have met with almost nothing but friendship and kindness. I have found the people most anxious after Scriptural knowledge, willing to open their minds to me, and

listen to what I have got to say. Never during an experience of over twelve years' Christian work have I witnessed a greater desire on the part of the people to hear what I have got to say.

"As you are aware, my visits and sales are almost to my R.C. brethren: to them I feel that I was sent chiefly. May the Holy Spirit still more open up my way and give us souls for our hire. Having faith in the Lord's work, I still press onward.

"Out of 174 sales this month, 150 has been to Roman Catholics. The Holy Spirit has been working in families which I least expected, but which I have constantly prayed for. I have sold Testaments, 'Precious Truths,' 'None but Jesus,' &c., in families who before this would not buy anything from me. I find signs of awakening and a craving for knowledge on Scriptural truths greatly on the increase amongst the people."

It is cheering to note the bright faith in which the labourer goes forth to his work and overcomes opposition in the Spirit of the Master.

"My sales have been larger during year 1892 than they have been in any year since I came to the South of Ireland. I continue to be well received both by Roman Catholics and others. The only exception was in a district where the priest denounced me, and even yesterday when I

was passing through that village a Roman Catholic woman came out of her house to meet me, shouting, 'Here's my friend,' and saying how glad she was to see me. I have often conversed with the same woman, and sold books to her son. I have sold more books to Roman Catholics last year than in any previous year, and in the country and villages I have many quiet conversations on Gospel themes, when I try to break down their prejudices and point out to them the way of salvation as revealed in the Word of God.

"In looking back over the past year I find I have great reason to thank God and take courage for the future, trusting in the promise that His 'Word shall not return unto Him void.'"

The following statement is too interesting to curtail. A colporteur who has lived sufficiently long in a district to make his Christian character and aims known becomes most influential for good. He has opportunities of moving more freely about among all classes of people than perhaps any other kind of agent:—

"Year after year the evidences are becoming more clear that Ireland is to have the Gospel. Doors hitherto closed against your agent have been

thrown wide open ; prejudices that were very strong have been broken down ; persons that were most opposed to the work of your Society have been spoken to personally about their immortal soul ; parties who have often refused to reason on the subject of religion have gladly availed themselves of the opportunity to discuss the subject in a friendly way ; many who have persistently refused to buy books and the Douay Testament have been led to purchase ; not a few have confessed their inability to fall in with all the teaching of Rome, and in more than one instance I have known separation from that Church to take place. Opposition and open hostility have largely become a thing of the past. Some of the friendliest people I meet are Roman Catholics ; sometimes they ask me not to give them a book that would be too religious ; while very often the old, old story simply told will draw from them expressions like the following :—‘God bless you, sir ; when you speak to me like that, *I could warm you in my heart.*’

“ In face of the above facts, it would be false humility on my part not to assert that the past year, humanly speaking, has been my best year since I joined your Society. My sales of Douay Testaments (238) are greatly in advance of any previous year. I cannot in the brief space at my disposal more than refer to the hundreds of conversations I have had with Roman Catholics, many of which, if reproduced in this report, would be most interesting, and gladden the hearts of those interested in Ireland’s highest welfare. *I would not like, however, to convey the idea through the*

report that the work is unattended by difficulties, or that your agent has only to call and speak, or sell books, as he might wish. But what I do say is, that by the exercise of patience and tact these difficulties can and are overcome.

“The Protestant community, for the most part, have received me very kindly, and the success of my effort is in a measure owing to the encouragement received from this quarter. In this department of work your agent has not been without tokens that God has been blessing the effort put forth in weakness to lead precious souls to Himself.

“In conclusion, I must say that after seven years’ experience of mission work I can confidently assert that *no Society is better adapted to carry the truths of the Gospel to our fellow-countrymen than the Bible and Colportage Society of Ireland.*”

The fruitfulness of our agent depends on the closeness with which he keeps to the Lord and the measure on which he is filled with His Spirit. No wonder that one who goes out with a consciousness of that truth should find “scores delighted to see me.”

“We who have the salvation of Ireland at heart—and, thank God, there are a great number who have—are cheered and encouraged when

we know that the object for which we are working is very near and dear to the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He is stronger than all the powers of darkness. *There is no use trying to conceal the fact that very many do not care to see my face, but, on the other hand, there are scores who are delighted to see me call.*

“Thank God for hundreds of fine, open-minded souls that I meet with. I have wended my way over many a barren moor and bleak hill, and entered many a little cabin and hut that are scarcely ever entered by priest or minister; the people have told me so. They are very poor, but they like to see me call, as I have still a comforting and cheering word for them. They have again and again thanked me for my visit. *These poor people would never have heard of a Saviour's love or His willingness to pardon, to liberate, to set them free, only for the Bible and Colportage Society.*

“It would only be mockery to ask such people to buy books, and to give them for nothing might be very unwise. In that case they would think we were giving them something to make Protestants of them, and run away to the priest immediately. A short while ago a colporteur of another society had called this way. As the people were not able to buy books, and he thought they were really in earnest, he gave a few here and there, notably Douay Testaments. The next day they were to be seen torn up and scattered about the streets. It requires great caution to be exercised

in going among these people, if we are to succeed at all in leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

"I sell a good many things to Roman Catholics—more texts of Scripture than anything else. This is still the Word of God, and it always has its own effects. *My plan is, before selling a book to any person, to explain fully all about it, and also to say if they find anything in the book contrary to what I have stated, that I will take it back.* In this way they see I don't want to deceive them, and they say I am honest. If I could only sell a little, I believe it would be of more use this way than if I would sell as many more, because then they would read them; whereas I would never have the same access to them again if I acted otherwise. *Some colporteurs think if they can only get the books into their hands by any means, this is all that is needed. This is the greatest mistake in the world.* When I commenced work here a few years ago, and beheld the poverty-stricken people and the power the priests had over them, I did not know for a while how I was going to do much in the way of selling books, but I soon discovered it was the Lord's work, and if I was going to succeed at all, it was only by relying on His strength, and by seeking His guidance every step of the way. To-day I thank Him for the doors He has opened and the abundant entrance I have found to many sorts and conditions of people, many of whom are thanking God to-day for the spiritual blessings they have received through the religious books circulated by our Society. *This has been told me several times.* I could sell a great deal more than I

do if my books were not so much of a spiritual nature. Anything I sell is very good. I use every means in my power to reach the people. I sell books on the road, in the fields, and everywhere I can get an opportunity.

News of CONVERSIONS' UNTO GOD are what gladdens the heart.

“ I am glad to have to write you of one young man, an R.C., who has been converted to God. Some time ago I sold a Douay Testament to his mother, which he read, as also another I sold to a Protestant. In reading, he found that God alone could forgive sins, so he commenced to attend evangelistic meetings when he was converted to God.

“ I have been told from time to time, as I go among the people, of the good they have received from reading the books and periodicals I sold them. One woman told me that through reading Horner’s Penny Story her husband gave up drink. I have heard a good many say they have been helped by that book, ‘How shall I go to God?’ and by Mr. Spurgeon’s books.

“ I am glad to say I have been able to sell some Douay Testaments this month where I least expected. One man told me he hoped at some time to be able to buy the Douay Testament—that book there had been so much talk about. Another, a Roman Catholic, who bought a Douay

Testament of me, said—‘ I cannot read it myself, but I have a little girl and she can read it for me.’ I know more than one instance where the children are reading the Scriptures to their parents.”

“ Few houses but could be opened.” May He that hath the keys of David, who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, grant a wide and effectual door for the spread of the Truth.

“ I have had a good many interesting cases. A young man who was much given to drink, used to leave his home and wander through the country, working for a few days here and there and then drinking what he had earned and coming home every now and then almost in rags, happened to come in this state shortly after I came here. I got into conversation with him on several occasions about his soul, with the result that he has come out on the Lord’s side and been consistent for the last nine months, giving every confidence that he is really united to Christ. Other two young men who professed to embrace Christ as their Saviour, and from several conversations I had with them, have also given evidence of the genuineness of their conversion by their changed life and walk. A married young man and his wife on whom I have been in the habit of calling, and who are Roman Catholics, have regularly bought good books

and read them, and they have got a Bible and read it constantly for themselves. I really believe that they are trusting in Jesus as their Saviour, and have passed from death unto life. I know they hardly ever go to chapel.

“ I have access to a good many Roman Catholic houses and have never been harshly treated, although in many cases I have been politely turned away without getting into their houses. *I feel sure that by using tact and care there are few Catholic houses but could be opened to us.*”

“ I have visited Roman Catholic families two and even three times before I ever mentioned religious subjects to them, until some favourable opportunity was brought up by our conversation that enabled me to do it without giving offence. I have thus got several doors opened to me that were very unlikely cases, and wherever I have been in the habit of visiting the Roman Catholics *I find them becoming less reserved and opening up their minds to me more and more every visit.*”

Too much emphasis cannot be laid on the fact that Colporteurs are not mere book hawkers, but missionaries, whose mission is to show forth the fulness and the completeness of the Redemption which is in Christ.

“ The books occupy a secondary place, they serve as an introduction. *My conversations with the people about Christ and eternal life, in my opinion, occupy the foremost place in my work.*”

“ Looking back over the past years I could give the names and addresses of nearly twenty Roman Catholics who gave up Romanism and embraced Christ through the instrumentality under God of your colporteur.

Surely there is much truth in the following statement that multitudes who for various reasons are unable to break from the system in which they have been reared, are in need of the most lively Christian sympathy. The number of those who are awaking to the shortcomings of the methods of Rome to satisfy the soul and introduce it to the sunshine of the Divine favour must be on the increase, and therefore we ask that Ireland may have a larger share of the compassion of God's people everywhere.

“ I have sold about 265 copies of the Douay Testament without notes chiefly to Roman Catholics directly, and I have reason to believe that they have been largely read in the dwellings of the people. I have sold thousands of Testaments, I believe, in this and a neighbouring county, since I came down south. I am a native of the West of Ireland, and I make use of my native tongue and whatever skill I otherwise possess in

order to lead Roman Catholics to Christ. I have friends among them whose spirit and behaviour I esteem, and though I have aided men to *break* with Romanism, *I am, betimes, more stricken with sympathy for those who 'Cry' in their bondage and seem to find no deliverance, and say to me substantially, 'I am now too old to change; you teach the truth.'* These listen attentively to what I have to say."

Impressed with the truths of the Gospel as set forth by Mr. Moody and Mr. M'Neill. The proclamation of a free salvation to one who has been taught otherwise must be impressive indeed. Of what service must a good book prove to one in an enquiring mind.

"I must say that the past year has been the most remarkable one I have ever passed through since my appointment. Of course I have met with a good deal of opposition and disappointment, but this has not made me downhearted, as I believe much blessing has attended my poor efforts. Although opposed, I believe the work has gone further, and more successful openings have been made than ever before. *We had a Jesuit mission here for a month, and during that time the poor colporteur was denounced once or twice a week. Some of my books were burned and others sought for the same purpose, but those who had them would not part with them.*

“ The only harm I received was to get pushed out of a few houses, and in a few more refused liberty to open my bag. I had some doors slammed in my face as I was about to enter. I should say that those who told me of the denunciation were Roman Catholics ; and one man after telling me bought a Douay Testament and a supply of Horner’s Stories and a Pilgrim’s Progress to read during the winter nights. I met a young man the other day and as we were journeying along the road together conversation turned on great preachers. He told me he went up to Dublin to hear Mr. Moody and Mr. M’Neill, and that he attended every meeting during the mission, and he seemed greatly impressed with the truths of the Gospel as set forth by those great men. He is reading the Scriptures, and although he has not given up Rome, because of the fear of persecution and scandal, yet I believe it will not be long before he takes the step. I asked him did he attend the mission here in his own church. He told me he did for a few nights, but got sick of it, as the rubbish he heard purporting to be from the Scriptures he could not find within the covers of the Book.

“ Such is the state of matters in many places in Ireland. The young are enquiring, and they are both able and willing to read, and we supply them with the best of reading.”

It is heart work that tells. The promise is that while youths shall grow weary and young men utterly fall, they who wait upon the Lord shall live with a strength that is ever renewed.

“I am now in my thirty-second year engaged in colportage work, and *my heart is still in it.*

“I have been only ordered out of one house during the year.

“The work has been going on steadily all the year round, and sales to the people have been better than any other year before.

“In one Protestant house where I visited, the man said, ‘*my heart warms towards you* when I see you, for it was you who sold me the Douay Testament that led me to Jesus my Saviour.’ *He was a Roman Catholic when he bought the Douay.*

“God bless our Colportage Society.”

Perseverance wins.

“Referring to notes taken some two years ago, I find there is now a greater opening for the sale of God’s Word and other good books, notwithstanding that a greater proportion are in possession of the Douay Testament. In two or three instances I sold where, on last visiting, I was ordered about my business.

“As a general rule, I think the oftener a place is visited the easier it becomes to approach the people.

“A short time ago I met with an old man who told me that about a year ago he had bought a Testament from an old man going about like

myself. His priest told him to burn it, but he said he thought he would see what was inside, so getting his prayer book he commenced to compare the different Gospels and epistles, and by that means proved that it was either the Catholic Testament, or else if it was the Protestant one there must be no difference between them, as it agreed exactly with what was in his prayer book.

“ In the direction of —— I came across several Testaments and other books sold to Roman Catholics two years ago, when last I worked that district, and from conversations with these parties I have no doubt that at least the Gospels have been well perused. Experiences like these should encourage us to go forward in faith, if a sale is not effected on the first visit the way is at least being opened up by faithful dealing.”

From all districts the same testimony comes that God's Word is omnipotent. Will Christian people not soon come to have a truer estimate of its power ?

“ It is now nearly sixteen years since I first commenced Colportage work, and the longer I am engaged in it I like it the better. Never since I commenced work have I found so good access among the Roman Catholic community as I have experienced during the past year. Two Roman Catholic young men who attended my prayer meeting regularly and seemed to be seriously impressed. I spoke to them on

several occasions about the great plan of salvation ; they both said that they ' would be ruled no longer by either priest or bishop, but were determined to *search and judge for themselves.*' A Roman Catholic girl who attended my prayer meeting has renounced the Roman Catholic religion altogether and is now in full communion with the Protestant Church."

The writer of the following feels that he has been able to take a bolder step than heretofore in exposing his books for sale on the streets. Faith seeks to push onward and forward.

" During the last year my work on the whole was encouraging. I have set up a portable table in fairs and markets and on the strand by the seaside, and it is an encouraging feature of the work that this has been done in many R.C. districts and towns.

" Good sales have been effected of God's Word and other pure and Gospel literature. We intend to carry on this mode of work this year, with God's help. I may add that in this port I can visit almost every ship. The crews take Douay Testaments and other books from me. *I always tell them the true religion aims at turning men from their sins.* To boast of being in the true Church while we know in our hearts we are doing the wrong thing, living in sin, will do no good whatever. Sin separates us from God. It is sin men must turn from. Then I lead on to talk about the work of the Lord Jesus—why He suffered and died."

The Society claims the sympathies of Christians of all denominations for the following reasons:—

- 1. It endeavours to circulate the Scriptures in the most remote districts.**
- 2. It is aggressive, but not hostile.**
- 3. It is catholic in spirit.**
- 4. It affords the various evangelical denominations an opportunity of working together for the good of our common country.**
- 5. The country is open for this work as never before.**

Contributions

In aid of the work will be thankfully received by the following :—

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